

Message Text

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71

ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 PC-10 USIA-15 IO-14 INR-11 DODE-00

AGR-20 INT-08 COME-00 SWF-02 RSC-01 DRC-01 /152 W

----- 123253

R 150800Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2449

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

UNCLAS NOUAKCHOTT 926

AFDROUGHT

EO 11652: NA

SUBJECT: SAHEL DROUGHT: EMERGENCY FOOD TRANSPORT

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 924

ACTION REQUESTED: AID/W BEGIN PLANNING WITH OSRO AND OTHER DONORS FIND WAYS AVOID YET ANOTHER EMERGENCY FOOD AIRLIFT IN 1975. RECOMMEND AS FIRST STEP IN THIS PLANNING PROCESS IMMEDIATE ASSIGNMENT TDY AID TRANSPORT SPECIALIST SURVEY PRESENT GIRM FOOD TRANSPORT/DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO PROBLEMS OF RAINY SEASON OVERLAND TRANSPORT AND PREPOSITIONING FOOD IN ISOLATED REGIONS.

1. REFTTEL UNDERLINES NEED FOR YET ANOTHER EMERGENCY AIRLIFT TO RELIEVE SEVERE FOOD SHORTAGES IN FIRST THREE REGIONS OF MAURITANIA. ALTHOUGH WE MOST RELUCTANT REQUEST AID/W FINANCE AN AIRLIFT AGAIN THIS YEAR, WE HAVE DISCUSSED MATTER THOROUGHLY WITH OTHER DONORS AND VISITING AID OFFICERS AND HAVE FOUND NO WORKABLE ALTERNATIVES. BECAUSE OF CONTINUING TRUCK TRANSPORT SHORTAGES, POOR CONDITION OVERLAND TRACKS, AND VAST DISTANCES OVER WHICH GRAIN MUST BE HAULED, GIRM HAS SIMPLY NOT BEEN ABLE TO PRE-STOCK ENOUGH GRAIN CARRY POPULATION IN ISOLATED FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD REGIONS THROUGH RAINS.

2. GIRM HAS, HOWEVER, TAKEN EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES TO AVOID
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AT LEAST SOME OF THE TRANSPORT BOTTLENECKS WHICH AROSE LAST

YEAR. FOR EXAMPLE, IT HAS NEARLY DOUBLED ITS GRAIN TRANSPORT FLEET, WHICH NOW NUMBERS APPROXIMATELY 270 VEHICLES VERSUS ABOUT 140 A YEAR AGO. DONORS HAVE PURCHASED ABOUT 90 OF THESE NEW VEHICLES; THE REST WERE FINANCED BY GIRM ITSELF. THOUGH MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS STILL PERSIST, MOST OF THIS FLEET IS ON THE ROAD THANKS TO EXCEPTIONAL GRIM AND DONOR EFFORTS TO OBTAIN NEEDED TIRES, SPARE PARTS AND SERVICE. LOOKING AHEAD TO NEXT YEAR, GIRM HAS RECENTLY SUSPENDED IMPORT DUTIES ON TRUCKS IN AN EFFORT TO ENCOURAGE PRIVATE HAULERS TO MODERNIZE AND ENLARGE THEIR TRANSPORT CAPACITY. GIRM HOPES THAT LOWER TRUCK PRICES COUPLED WITH NEW PREMIUM PAYMENTS TO HAULERS OF EMERGENCY GRAIN WILL, IN COMING MONTHS, EASE THE TRANSPORT CRISIS.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, GIRM HAS NO EXACT IDEA OF WHAT ITS GRAIN TRANSPORT NEEDS MIGHT BE FOR THE REMAINDER OF 1974 AND OUT. IN THIS LINE, WE COULD BE OF MAJOR ASSISTANCE AND HOPEFULLY SAVE MONEY FOR GIRM AND DONORS ALIKE. AN AID TRANSPORT SPECIALIST ASSIGNED TO MAURITANIA TDY FOR A MONTH OR SIX WEEKS COULD SURVEY THE CURRENT TRANSPORT NETWORK AND ADVISE GIRM AND DONORS ON MEASURES THAT ALL NEED TO TAKE TO AVOID AN AIRLIFT IN 1975. (WE DISCUSSED THIS PROPOSITION WITH GIRM'S DROUGHT RELIEF COORDINATOR, MINHEALTH OULD BAH, AND FOUND HIM WILLING TO ACCEPT SUCH TDY SERVICES.) TRANSPORT SPECIALIST COULD ALSO ASSIST GIRM IN IMPROVING GRAIN STORAGE AND HANDLING TECHNIQUES, AND WITH ARRANGEMENTS FOR BARGE SHIPMENT FOODS AND MEDICINES UP RIVER TO BOGUE KAEDI AND OTHER TOWNS CUT OFF FROM ROAD ACCESS DURING RAIN.

4. AID SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER SUPPORTING UNVSRDWSS PROPOSED DROUGHT VEHICLE MAINTENANCE FACILITY AT NOUAKCHOTT. THIS FACILITY WOULD BE A MULTI-DONOR EFFORT AIMED AT SUPPLYING SPARE PARTS AND SERVICE FOR SOME 250 DROUGHT VEHICLES, MAINLY TRUCKS, AND TRAINING MAURITANIAN MECHANICS. IF WE BEGIN NOW, THE FACILITY COULD BE IN PLACE BY EARLY 1975.

5. LOOK FORWARD TO DISCUSSING ABOVE AND ANY OTHER PROPOSITIONS FOR IMPROVING FOOD TRANSPORT/DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM DURING MY UPCOMING WASHINGTON CONSULTATIONS. SHURTLEFF

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISASTER RELIEF, AFDROUGHT, FOODS, MILITARY AIRLIFTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974NOUAKC00926
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740189-0459
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740749/aaaabpkf.tel
Line Count: 99
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AID
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: NOUAKCHOTT 924
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 NOV 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 NOV 2002 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <16 JAN 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAHEL DROUGHT: EMERGENCY FOOD TRANSPORT
TAGS: EAID, MR, US, XA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005